

# **PANDEMIC EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**

## **White Paper on Addressing Student Learning**

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### **Developed by Indiana Educational Management Associations**

Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents

Indiana Association of School Business Officials

Indiana Association of School Principals

Indiana School Boards Association

Indiana Small and Rural Schools Association

Indiana Urban Schools Association

Coalition of Growing and Suburban Schools

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In the spring of 2020, cases of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 began to appear in the United States and in Indiana schools. The Community Schools of Avon was the first school corporation to close a school due to a positive case, and then the entire school corporation moved to virtual learning on March 10, 2020. Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb closed all schools for in-person instruction through May 1 on March 19, and this order was extended through the 2019-2020 school year. Educators implemented Continuous Learning Plans to ensure education could be delivered online, and for those without reliable Internet access, devised numerous ways students could access materials via internet hotspots or through paper packets. The Indiana educational system responded quickly, and with great effort and care, to ensure student learning and student well-being continued as the pandemic quickly developed.

The 2020-2021 school year began with school corporations employing numerous models of in-person, virtual, and hybrid schedules for student instruction. These models were selected based on student and community needs, COVID-19 impact, technology infrastructure, and county health department direction. School leaders monitored and modified how instruction was delivered as positive coronavirus cases were identified within a school or corporation, and often educators were responsible for both in-person and virtual students at the same time. Virtual instruction March through May was quickly developed with varied quality, instruction in the fall semester improved greatly as teachers received training or self-taught themselves on best practices. The suddenness of having to move to virtual instruction did expose a need for pre-service programs to develop these skills during undergraduate courses, and for corporations to support ongoing training to ensure quality student instruction.

Families were provided the opportunity to elect in-person or virtual instruction, and the percentages of each fluctuated as the pandemic's impact spread across Indiana. Rising positive cases and the requirement to quarantine due to positive contacts created reasons for students to opt for virtual instruction. The percentage of virtual students is difficult to determine until final student data is submitted by schools for the 2020-2021 school year. This is also true for determining what corporations operated in-person and virtually, reading the reporting from Education Insight (Appendix A) bears witness to the volume of changes that occurred in the fall semester.

Three factors impacting student learning in 2020-2021 are the number of quarantined students and the number of non-enrolled students. First, quarantined in-person students lost learning opportunities due to close contact. This could mean up to 10 consecutive school days of virtual learning, which was not their desired option. Principals reported that this same student, upon returning to in-person instruction, might again be quarantined, and thus lose out again on valuable instruction. Indiana reported up to 14,000 students did not enroll as anticipated in Indiana schools and were potentially not receiving any formal instruction. Second, High School students who did not earn credits in 2020-2021, but then return in 2021-2022 will potentially face challenges in meeting Indiana graduation requirements. Aside from the personal impact to them, this will negatively impact schools as graduation rates are calculated for successive cohorts. Another especially impactful issue is the number of Kindergarten students who may have delayed enrollment by one year. Assuming these students return in 2021-2022, this will place an additional burden on class sizes and space requirements as we meet their learning needs. Finally, educators themselves were often quarantined, thus disrupting educational lesson delivery even if being conducted virtually. These situations also caused additional stress on individuals and the educational system, Indiana must attend to the mental health of our educators as they continue to serve students.

## **DEFINITIONS**

We have provided the following definitions as a way that we all can discuss this critical issue with common language and terms.

Complexity: Indiana uses the term “Complexity” to broadly describe the additional supports required to compensate for adverse social and economic conditions. Examples include poverty, displacement, homelessness, and other adverse conditions. School funding includes a complexity grant that provides additional resources for the education of at-risk students, or those in need of enhanced social and emotional learning interventions. For the 2020-21 school year, the state utilized the number of students participating in either the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or in the state’s foster care assistance program to certify the complexity population.

Formative Assessments: Assessments that provide ongoing feedback to teachers and students to improve teaching and learning. These help identify problem target areas or skills within a broader concept. These may be teacher designed in-class assessments, or whole grade or school formal assessments given multiple times in a school year. Also known as interim assessments, these are often classified as low stakes assessments.

Learning Loss: Any specific or general loss of knowledge and skills or to reversals in academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student’s education. This concept then also indicates learning yet come to ensure mastery. This has often been discussed in the context of summer vacation, COVID-19 has forced gaps and discontinuities upon all students regardless of demographics or community populations.

Learning Gap: Synonymous terms could also be Achievement Gap or Opportunity Gap and relates to the gaps that exist between subgroups of students who would be expected to exhibit similar knowledge levels. These gaps existed pre-pandemic and may be greater due to numerous existing factors that impacted their learning abilities.

NWEA: This acronym stands for the Northwest Evaluation Association and is provided as an example of a formative or interim assessment schools utilize widely to help determine individual skill deficiencies. Given three times a year, it helps measure student achievement and growth in math, reading, language usage, and science. Other school-wide assessments exist and inclusion of NWEA is only intended as an example.

Summative Assessments: Assessments that are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period (unit, grading period, or year.) These are generally high stakes assessments due to their impact on grades and/or subsequent learning programming. Standardized assessments fall into this category, though some detailed information may be used to diagnose individual student skills that are deficient.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Educators gained innumerable insights into educating students during the pandemic as we taught virtually, created new socially distanced classrooms, and dealt with ever changing numbers of students who tested positive or were quarantined due to close contact with a positive case. From March through December, teachers and administrators all exhibited dedication, passion, and compassion and devoted countless hours to educating and caring for the needs of Indiana students. Following is a short narrative of lessons learned during the pandemic that will guide future education efforts to address the resulting learning loss.

Student Engagement: A very real issue for teachers was the ability to engage students via virtual learning. Educators did learn to adapt lesson plans and activities to address student engagement, yet visually scanning an in-person classroom is a much different experience than looking at 20-30 squares of faces on a computer screen. A further impact was students often turned off their computer camera despite guidelines to not do so. While this might be seen as merely student misbehavior, it was also due to home conditions. Students did not want others to see and hear the home environment, or they also needed to limit bandwidth to enable them to hear the teacher and other students. Virtual learning can be done well with the appropriate training, expectations, and settings and we must all support this effort to maximize learning for those which it works best. As reported by one school, the continuity of instruction for those out of school has improved through dedicated resources, both technology and human. Our expanded use of technology has also allowed us to better improve connections with families.

Broadband Access: Access to reliable internet disrupted education throughout Indiana as students were forced to utilize numerous strategies to gain access to materials. Families sought access in public spaces or commercial parking lots, and school corporations and communities rapidly deployed internet capable buses or internet hotspots so students could at least access lessons and submit assignments. Those with home internet found that multiple individuals maxed out bandwidth, thus limiting synchronous learning opportunities. Educators adapted by adjusting due dates or providing recorded lessons for later viewing. While clearly disrupting the educational process, the pandemic also showcased our need for increased internet access and bandwidth. Educators are creative problem solvers and eliminating this barrier creates educational opportunities in numerous settings.

Socio-Economic Status: A family's socio-economic status also impacted student educational opportunities. While internet access is a given for many Indiana residents, to others this is a luxury and thus isn't automatically available at home. Internet providers did step up to provide very low cost options, but families with previous internet bills were denied access. Generally, schools in low complexity districts changed quickly and rather easily from in-person to virtual instruction with little or no loss of instructional time or opportunity. However, high complexity districts had to deal with lack of Internet access, student personal devices, broadband availability, proper supervision, and even appropriate spaces in homes for students to use as learning spaces. These situations exacerbated learning gaps and most likely contributed to learning loss.

Special Education Students: Disabilities within this category are wide-ranging and thus the pandemic impacted each group differently, yet collectively these students are at risk of experiencing learning loss just due to the barriers inherent during the pandemic. Legally, schools are required to provide services per the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and schools did make every effort to meet this requirement. Yet those opting for virtual learning, and those who may have been quarantined would not have experienced the same level of service expected within a normal in-person school year. Short and long term impacts of the pandemic will result and educators must be prepared to address both to optimize student learning.

English Language Students: These students make up roughly 5% of Indiana students and represent over 275 spoken languages. Their identification as an EL student is due to limited proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing academic English. Serving this population is similar to serving the Special Education students; Individual Learning Plans guide educators and many employ small group and differentiated instruction to enable EL students to progress with language acquisition and therefore attainment of content knowledge. The pandemic posed significant difficulties in directly servicing EL students due to limited internet access and the missed in-person learning opportunities. It can take 3-5 years for an EL student to become English proficient and the learning loss elongates this timeline.

Social Emotional Learning: In addition to the identified academic issues, how students respond socially and emotionally to the pandemic's impact has to be acknowledged. Daily news, social media, and family experiences all impact students. Loss of jobs and income are at the forefront, as are personal experiences as family members test positive or even lose their life to the coronavirus. Schools are instructional hubs, yet they are also places where students socialize and learn life lessons to guide their emotional well-being. Spring 2020 brought school closures and thus limited social interactions. Fall 2020 provided greater access to school, yet also gave students an upfront experience as the pandemic grew within Indiana. The pandemic is mimicking a trauma event for all students and staff, and this event is one that continues without a definite endpoint. This will impact learning for the remainder of this school year. This is evident as academically high achievers are still achieving at the higher levels, but at the same time, they are experiencing higher levels of stress. For older students, educators reported many young adults were forced into mature roles as caregivers for siblings, or as wage earners for the family. Indiana has to include Social and Emotional Learning as a focus as we all address learning and educational opportunities.

Reading, Math, and Language Arts: As these areas are the building blocks for student academic success, we outline the lessons we learned, while acknowledging that all content areas should be reviewed as we address student learning and opportunities.

Whole group instruction can effectively be delivered virtually, yet nothing takes the place of in-person contact. Students who were behind and needed intervention support are also those that don't have the best home support. These interventions are best delivered one-to-one and are often hands-on experiences which contributes to the learning loss. Teachers are also proficient at adapting their interventions to virtual instruction, this also requires time and support for educators to develop and collaborate with colleagues and professionals.

Students who were previously successful have not experienced the level of learning loss others have, if at all. Those that already had a learning gap have had this exacerbated due to their learning loss. Some students are successful with virtual instruction, these are generally not those that experienced learning loss in one of the content areas.

Students have struggled in math due to their struggle over the spring shutdown period with mastering facts. Teachers found it difficult to monitor student fact mastery as so much of this practice is done in class where the teacher can monitor skill achievement, and then interventions are set up to assist this mastery. Consequently, this fall fact mastery is behind and the lack of fact mastery has impacted other math skills that those facts are needed for. This matches school data that shows over a 10% loss (fall-fall), where typical loss in the same time period is 1-2%. A middle school reported that their NWEA data is comparable to the national data showing a drop in growth. Their projected ILEARN pass rates, especially in Math, show a large drop as compared to previous years.

Writing skills have also seen a large impact since much of the virtual focus was on the meat and potato skills of math and reading. Language Arts/ writing usage/grammar was not as focused on and it is now showing a big deficit as students are writing and struggle with sentence structure and grammar usage more so than normal. This is reinforced by schools reporting that reading growth has remained fairly stable or has had a slight dip, certainly different than is seen in the math growth data.

Overall, the impact of screen time for students is of concern, so ongoing use of technology must be balanced with in-person instruction by highly trained teachers. The virtual instruction students were forced to experience in the spring, and in the fall, has resulted in student knowledge acquisition lagging behind a semester to a school year given the complexity of what we expect at each grade level.

## **SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS**

As outlined earlier, Indiana educators met the challenges posed by educating students during the pandemic and these successes merit mention to guide us as we move through 2021. They also provide ways in which we may modify educational delivery post-pandemic.

Virtual instruction and student engagement have improved, especially since March of 2020. Online instruction, however, requires greater commitment from students to engage with the instructor as well as greater flexibility in how students are counted as present. Ongoing professional development should be provided at the state and local level to support all educators in this area. Teacher preparation programs should also elevate this skill area so our new teaching cohorts are best prepared to serve students virtually.

How-to videos or recorded classroom lessons creates numerous ways to engage beyond the daily lesson. Students can rewind these videos and consume the information at their own pace. Student pacing can be better customized to accommodate student learning and access to the internet. These are especially helpful to special education and English Language students who need different pacing or need repetition within the English language.

The use of our learning management system created new communication tools and students engaged with teachers through this tool. This allows quarantined kids and those who are missing school due to an illness to maintain continuity of learning. Many dedicated educators engaged with students in this fashion well after typical school hours to facilitate learning.

In-person after school instruction is effective as it allows for smaller student to teacher ratios, and it allows a teacher to hone in on specific missing skills. Putting these in place accelerates the pace of learning so we can address both learning loss and the learning gap.

Additional math instruction, whether in-person in a classroom or embedded within the other content areas, also addresses learning loss and the learning gap. This occurs when we have appropriate staff that are trained in critical skill areas and when we create the time to do so.

## ADDRESSING STUDENT LEARNING 2021 – 2025

In this section we provide insights into how the Indiana General Assembly may support Indiana students and educators over the next four years. We know the pandemic's impact has been great and considering support over the next two bienniums is appropriate as we further evaluate student achievement and growth.

Addressing the Learning loss in Indiana students is certainly dependent upon the subject, school, and community. Almost universal, however, is that in-person instruction is the best approach to allow educators the opportunity to work with individuals or small groups. This approach also helps address the social emotional element of education that is also critical for student success. In-person instruction has certainly occurred in our schools, yet it has been provided with social distancing and masks that limit the warm classroom environment many students need as they seek reassurance for their effort and successes. As our vaccine efforts continue, we hope that we may return quickly to a more normal school routine as we seek to best work with students.

- Instruction should be provided by our trained professional educators who are best equipped to diagnose and address deficiencies. This poses a challenge as these individuals are also in charge of classrooms, yet creative solutions can and will be found with regard to how we address both the classroom and individual needs.
- Time is the constant need, and this is found and created by utilizing other responsible adults within a classroom or school day at appropriate times, and by diminishing as much as is able, other demands placed upon teachers. This falls to the local administrators and to the state as we recognize the priority is addressing the learning loss.
- The primary strategy suggested by educators was remediation offered during the school day. This obviously requires additional staffing supports, whether adults to support whole class instruction while the teacher works with small groups or individuals, or skilled educators who can take on the task of addressing the learning loss while the classroom teacher remains with the class. Limiting factors with this strategy is the availability of qualified staff, and available room space.
- Extended day instruction is an option in some communities, yet these will also impact the family structure due to transportation and caring for family members. The state and corporations will need to ensure these dynamics are addressed if choosing extended day instruction. This scenario also asks our dedicated educators to continue instruction at the end of the school day, and we must be aware of staff energy, additional compensation, and additional personnel to share responsibilities for instruction. Our retired and pre-service teachers, with guidance, may be able to assist with extended day instruction.

- Our current missing students will require additional supports beyond those that have experienced learning loss while enrolled in in-person or virtual instruction. The varied quality of educational programming that may have occurred for these students presents additional needs teachers must address beyond the already mentioned strategies. Additionally, superintendents report that they know they will see a larger than normal Kindergarten cohort in 2021-2022 as many parents simply delayed starting student this school year. We anticipate both missing and delayed entry students may require additional staffing to ensure appropriate instructional strategies may be employed.
- High School students may be best able to take advantage of summer school given their ability to make use of transportation. These credits will enable our current seniors and our underclass students to maintain progress to graduation. The state needs to be aware that the pandemic will impact graduation rates even as educators strive to keep students on track.
- Our new teachers who are currently in pre-service preparatory programs require training in identifying and addressing learning loss and learning gaps. Natural retirements and hiring practices demonstrate our newer teachers will be faced with tackling the pandemic's impact on both learning loss and the learning gap over the next four years as this paper suggests. Our Indiana programs do produce strong teacher candidates and they can meet this challenge by coordinating efforts with local schools, adjusting curriculum, and ensuring their own state financial support is adequate.
- Social and Emotional Learning supports should be integrated across all buildings and all levels. Even students who have demonstrated strong academic skills have experienced the stress brought on by the pandemic, and we know, too, that this stress is evident in all socio-economic levels. We must ensure our students are ready to learn as we apply multiple instructional strategies and methods.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

School corporations will need financial support to implement intervention and remediation plans to address the learning loss and the learning gap. We acknowledge HB 1008 and the intent to provide \$150,000,000 in this biennium to support our schools who submit a student learning acceleration plan. This plan should be developed locally and can utilize existing community and corporation resources to best address student needs. A school corporation is best positioned to identify deficient skills and to implement relevant proven strategies. A brief study of how virtual education during the pandemic could or has impacted corporation finances is provided in Appendix B. This study was prepared by the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents.

There are numerous factors impacting the amount of money necessary to address the learning loss.

- The number of impacted students can be determined by each school utilizing available formative assessment data. Additional dollars are not necessary to fund assessments, and we can use any available testing funds to support the learning plans. ILEARN testing may provide state-wide data which allows analysis of trends and gaps, yielding information to inform curriculum planning and assist teacher preparation programs as they work with our future educators.
- A beginning teacher making \$40,000 per year has a rate of approximately \$35/hour, while more experienced teachers will have rates of \$40 - \$50/hour. Using statewide teacher experience data will yield approximate amounts to support those assisting students after school and during summer school. It may be assumed that additional educators assisting during the school day would have a higher hourly rate, though all dollars provided to school corporations may be allocated outside of collective bargaining to maximize resources.
- Local school corporations can join with community partners to provide creative solutions to working with students during and after the school day. This might involve staffing, space allocation, and by using other existing resources (software, programming, etc.). Blending these combines the knowledge base and assessment practices of education professionals with community stakeholders. Consideration should then be given to flexibility within the grant structure to allow these partnerships to flourish.

## RESEARCH

*COVID Slide: Research on Learning Loss & Recommendations to close the Gap, August 2020, Illuminate Education.*

Utilizing scores from their proprietary assessments, researchers at Illuminate Education found that all students started this school year behind anticipated achievement levels. This would require remediation interventions for reading and math content areas especially in the K-3 grade levels. Reading loss was especially evident in Kindergarten students, while math achievement loss impacted students in grades K-5.

*The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement, April, 2020, Northwest Evaluation Association*

NWEA conducted a study similar to that of Illuminate Education using their formative assessments and arrived at similar conclusions. The COVID Slide was greater at the lower grades (3 – 6) than that of upper grades, (7-8). This loss of learning also was more evident in mathematics than that of reading, even while assuming the normal loss students experience after the summer break.

It is also important to note that this data could not account for those students who did not participate in the formative assessments. These students often represent households with a lower socio-economic status and thus also possess fewer resources to support student learning. This could further impact the gap seen in skill attainment.

*Visible Learning: Ranking 252 Influences and Effect Sizes on Student Achievement, John Hattie, 2015*

John Hattie is an educational researcher based in New Zealand and conducted a meta-analysis of nearly 1200 studies to provide educators with factors that can most positively affect student achievement. These 252 influences fall under the categories of the student, home, school, curricula, teacher, teaching and learning approaches, and the classroom.

This very brief summary cannot provide in detail all factors, but viewing these positive influences does provide Indiana educators and policy makers with direction on how best to support students who have experienced learning loss. Those listed below have been grouped for relativeness and also have an effect size above 0.5. This was an arbitrary cutoff and simply, the larger the effect size, the greater positive impact the strategy would have on student achievement.

- Teacher efficacy and utilizing multiple classroom strategies such as integrating prior knowledge, classroom discussion, scaffolding, micro-teaching, and reciprocal teaching.
- Students utilizing prior ability, mnemonics, and evaluation and reflection. Also, engaging in direct practice, repeated reading programs, concept mapping, and evaluation and reflection.
- Establishing appropriately challenging learning goals and utilizing concentration, persistence and engagement.

## APPENDIX A

The Lake Central School Corporation Board of Trustees votes to approve a 90-minute early release every Wednesday to give teachers more time to better serve their remote learners. Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation Board of Trustees votes to relieve the pressure on elementary teachers so they are no longer responsible for concurrently teaching students both virtually and face-to-face.

Protsman Elementary School in St. John placed an entire classroom of students in quarantine due to significant comingling with a student who tested positive for Covid-19, reports the Gary Post-Tribune . . . Vincennes Community School Corporation sent home an entire first-grade classroom at Tecumseh-Harrison Elementary School for two weeks of quarantine . . . three classrooms at West Lafayette Elementary School were placed in quarantine following a single positive coronavirus case . . .

The Metropolitan School District of North Posey County closed its schools and moved to a fully virtual environment for the week of September 28 due to an increase in active cases among students and staff. Princeton Community High School in the North Gibson School Corporation shifted to at-home virtual learning from September 29 through October 9 as a result of custodial and food service staffing shortages stemming from an uptick in positive cases and quarantines. Cannelton City Schools shut down completely the week of September 28 in response to Covid complications and then implemented virtual learning through Google Classroom for the week of October 5

Frankfort Middle School and Frankfort High School moved to elearning for the week of October 5 after two students and three staff tested positive for Covid-19. One positive case in a student at Chesterton High School sent 39 individuals into quarantine. Garrett Middle School canceled in-person classes for the week of September 28 in response to six positive cases of Covid-19. Lafayette's Central Catholic Jr-Sr. High School moved to remote learning for the week of September 28 after one student and staff member tested positive for Covid-19. Rossville Consolidated School Corporation closed the middle/high school for a week of e-learning due to two positive Covid-19 cases and a large number of students identified as close contacts.

At Boonville High School in the Warrick County School Corporation, 179 students were quarantined after they were identified as close contacts of six students who tested positive for the coronavirus. An outbreak at Baugo Community Schools in Elkhart put 11% of staff into quarantine. With high numbers of staff in isolation or quarantine, Northeast Dubois Jr./Sr. High School and Northeast Dubois Intermediate School will pivot to virtual learning from October 7 – 16. Three positive student Covid tests at Oregon-Davis Jr./Sr. High School moves the school to virtual learning.

*Entries taken from Indiana Education Insight, October 12, 2020, Volume 24, No. 21*

Anderson Community School Corporation fell back to full-time virtual learning for all students November 3-13 as Covid-19 infections showed no signs of slowing. Cloverdale Community School Corporation implemented elearning October 23-November 3 due to a shortage of available substitute teachers after a staff member tested positive for Covid-19 and contact tracing identified several teachers who may have been exposed. Delphi Community School Corporation paused in-person attendance and moved to at-home learning October 28-November 10 due to a surge in coronavirus cases. M.S.D. of Pike Township downgrades middle school students to a hybrid learning model, citing an increase in the local positivity rate. Charles A. Beard Memorial School Corporation retreated to virtual learning October 22-November 6 following an uptick in coronavirus cases.

The “cumulative impact” of contact tracing and medical quarantines convinced Nettle Creek School Corporation to send all secondary students home to distance learn October 26-November 6, reports the Richmond Palladium-Item. The Wayne County Health Department told the newspaper that community spread has not been linked to schools being in session. “We’re not seeing widespread transmission inside the schools. We see students, we see staff members, we see teachers having COVID, but we’re not tracing that back to the classroom.” In Terre Haute, Meadows Elementary School suspended face-to-face instruction and activated remote learning October 26-30 due to critical staff members in medical quarantine. North Miami Middle/High School initiated distance learning October 27-October 30 after confirmed Covid cases that occurred over Fall break resulted in multiple staff entering medical quarantine.

Morgan Township Middle/High School in the East Porter County School Corporation migrated to a virtual format for two weeks beginning October 26 as Covid spread. A rapid rise in confirmed coronavirus cases and individuals in quarantine forces Mitchell Community Schools to hunker down in e-learning October 29-November 13. Southern Wells Community Schools activates its e-learning plan for two weeks November 2-13 after a spike in Covid-19 cases and individuals in quarantine . . . the South Putnam Community School Corporation sent grades 6-12 home to learn by computer October 27-30 due to a coronavirus-inflicted staff shortage. The rising tide of coronavirus cases prompts Terre Haute North, Terre Haute South, and West Vigo high schools in the Vigo County School Corporation to revert back to an alternating A/B schedule until Winter break. The high schools had operated on a full-time, full-capacity basis for fewer than two weeks. Woodrow Wilson Middle School in the Vigo County School Corporation initiated virtual learning October 30-November 6 as coronavirus cases continued to climb. Rising Sun-Ohio County Community School Corporation closed for virtual learning October 29-November 9. Parents were informed that “A staff member in a unique position with exposure to a large number of students has tested positive for COVID-19.”

Maconaquah School Corporation in Bunker Hill pulled back to elearning October 30-November 6 after multiple staff members tested positive in the span of a few days and a large number of staff entered quarantine. As the virus flared back up, Greenfield-Central High School postponed its plan to bring all students back into the building four days a week starting November 2. Instead the school will stick with an alternating day schedule. Greencastle Community School Corporation implemented at-home learning October 30-November 6 after a single positive student case resulted in multiple staff quarantines and a shortage of available staff members. Westville High School in the M.S.D. of New Durham Township ratcheted up to “Red” on its color-coded pandemic plan.

Teaching and learning will be fully virtual November 2-13. Decatur County Community Schools closed for two weeks of e-learning to help stop the spread of Covid-19. Students will be invited back to the buildings starting November 16. Knox Community School Corporation continued virtual learning for the week of November 2 due to Covid impacts on staffing. West Central Elementary School in Francesville conducted elearning during the week of November 2. “We lack staffing for in-person instruction only because a few outside cases resulted in quarantines for a significant number of staff members.” Multiple positive student cases over a two-day period compelled Northeastern Wayne School Corporation in Fountain City to use virtual instruction for grades 6-12 from October 29 through November 11.

Meridian Elementary School in the Clay Community Schools closed for two weeks of remote learning beginning November 2 after a staff member tested positive for the coronavirus. Face-toface schooling will resume November 16. Memorial Elementary School in Valparaiso will deliver learning virtually November 4-16, citing quarantine protocols that have depleted 30% of in-person learners and a bevy of staff. The Hamilton Southeastern Schools Board of School Trustees voted to keep fifth and sixth grade on a hybrid schedule rather than resuming full-time, full-capacity learning on November 2 as previously planned. Jennings County High School closed and moved to Google Classroom November 3-13 after getting slammed by positive Covid cases. Jac-Cen-Del Community School Corporation in Osgood reluctantly switched to virtual instruction for two weeks beginning November 3 after being pummeled with student and staff quarantines. Rochester Community School Corporation halted in-person learning November 3-16 given a large number of faculty and staff absences caused by Covid.

Perry Central Community Schools in Leopold is operating in an online-only format November 3-16 after being inundated with a large number of staff in isolation or quarantine. Hamilton Heights High School moved instruction to Canvas for two weeks November 2-13 after a fifth student tested positive for the coronavirus. In the Indianapolis Public Schools, Raymond F. Brandes School 65 closed for e-learning after three positive cases were detected in the school. A positive Covid case in the food services department shut down Taylor Elementary School in Kokomo for two weeks of virtual learning. Carroll Consolidated School Corporation closed for two weeks and moved instruction online, as the pandemic remains far from under control. Students will return to the buildings November 11. Wawasee High School closed for virtual learning November 5-13 due to a cluster of Covid cases. Covid concerns force

Greenwood Middle School and Greenwood High School students to shift to a hybrid learning model beginning November 9 after the Indiana State Department of Health placed Johnson County in the “orange” tier, reflective of a “moderate-to-high” risk of spread. November 6 was an e-learning day for all of the middle and high school students. The hybrid model will see students participate in alternating days of in-person instruction based on last names. Student will have two days per week of in-person instruction and Wednesdays will be reserved for teacher office hours and online instruction. With the Indiana State Department of Health placing Fayette County on its second week of “red” status — denoting a “high risk” for the spread of Covid, and one of only three counties in that category last week, the Fayette County Health Department and and Fayette County School Corporation are planning to curtail all extracurricular activity for two weeks, from November 5 - November 16.

*Entries taken from Indiana Education Insight, November 9, 2020, Volume 24, No. 23*

## APPENDIX B

### Committee Report

***1. Why should your virtual students be funded at 100% for 2020-21? Why should they be funded at 100% for 2021-22 and thereafter?***

The SBOE has made accommodations for the September count, for which all schools are very grateful, but the uncertainties of COVID are still very much present and will remain well past the February 2021 count date. For numerous reasons districts need assurance of 100% funding of virtual students through the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. Districts do not have the flexibility to adjust instructional staffing at midyear, and midyear cuts to operational staff at these times would limit our ability to safely and effectively remain open. Virtual instruction not only requires the same (or higher) staffing as in-person instruction throughout the 2020-21 school year, it also brings additional technology costs.

School administrators and school boards across the state have worked directly with their local communities, parents, businesses, and health departments to determine the best options for educating students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers and school employees have gone above and beyond in planning and adapting to do what is right and best practice for students and families.

For the 2020-21 school year the vast majority of students are attending school in person, learning virtually, or participating in a combination of both models. Hybrid virtual and in-person models may feature either or both synchronous, and asynchronous learning activities.

Decisions for families and schools have been influenced by

- Forced closures causing virtual education by order of the health department or executive order by the Governor.
- Safety protocols that have led to the need for quarantined students to access direct instruction with their peers from the assigned classroom teacher.
- Commitment to provide traditional and virtual students with learning opportunities based on the same standards and expectations.

Across the state individual programs for virtual learning have been created with similar guidelines and provisions including, but not limited to

- Instructional content and expectations for virtual learning align with those for in-person students enrolled in the same course(s) and grade level at the school.
- Instruction is provided by an Indiana-licensed teacher who provides opportunities for daily, meaningful teacher-student interaction for all students.
- All available academic, social, and emotional supports align with those of in-person students enrolled in the same school.

- All available student extra-curricular activities and parent engagement activities align with those for in-person students enrolled in the same school.
- In many cases students learning online are being offered extra small group support.
- All students may transition from virtual to in-person learning at the school if remote learning is deemed inappropriate or unproductive by the parent and/or the school.
- Attendance policies align with those for in-person students enrolled in the same school, and daily attendance is recorded based on student engagement on at least 180 scheduled instructional days.
- School meals are made available daily to all students.

Because of the intention to develop multiple options for safety and best instruction, it is our belief that schools should not be punished for situations out of their control such as a global pandemic. Changing the funding formula for schools at this point would have a profoundly negative impact on everything that has been created during this difficult time.

Therefore, it is our strong request that funding should be continued at 100% to support the safe and comprehensive programs that districts have worked to create. Virtual education programs must, at a minimum, accurately count students in attendance, establish clearly defined expectations for students and staff, include rigorous and relevant content, ensure continuity of instruction, and accommodate the needs of special student groups. While these requirements mirror those for in-person instruction, they are actually more challenging and demand more school resources, not less.

## ***2. What should be the minimum standards in providing virtual education in the traditional K-12 setting going forward?***

In future fiscal years the status of funding should depend on the purpose of the virtual education. If the virtual setting is created to accommodate families in an emergency health situation, then the learning (whether synchronous or asynchronous) needs to be identified by the local school board as a program option for addressing the health emergency, as all our reopening plans were.

We do believe that, absent an emergency designation, a purely virtual program (one adopted by a local school board and identified as meeting the needs of students in an alternative environment) should not receive full funding for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond. The purpose of this kind of program is different from that of an emergency program enacted by the board, and thus could be subject to the 85% funding level already established by the state. A virtual program in the face of a natural disaster, such as online learning during a flood or after a tornado, or as a result of a pandemic is a quick pivot and becomes the way the district is forced to address the learning of *all* students. A special program created for students to choose or a totally online virtual setting by its nature is an *option*.

However, for 2021-2022, particularly if there is no vaccine or one is not widely available and the pandemic is not under control, we would argue that the same logic will apply then as applies to the current school year. If families and staff are scared or precautions need to continue because of a

continuing public health crisis, the old rules of virtual schools do not apply as schools adapt to the current reality. We support the establishment of uniform minimum standards or expectations for programs under these conditions.

We would also advocate for the potential of 100% funding for a student's first year in virtual schooling and then reduced to 85% after that as schools develop virtual schools for those families that would continue to request virtual schooling after the pandemic.

**3. How are you interpreting the "more than 50%" in the statute (I.C. 20-43-6-3) that determines 85% funding? Is this 50% of the number of days? Is this 50% of the total required hours per day?**

The emergency needs for safe learning (regardless of the format) has put districts across the state in various situations regarding the use or format of online learning. As districts have worked to maintain educational standards as well as safety protocols it has led to a concern in the definition of what the impact of 50% learning has on the 85% funding formula. It is the committee's opinion the complete funding should be given in its entirety to those online programs that are established by default of the pandemic rather than by design.

It is recommended that, due to pandemic, curricular designs for safety the 50% attendance rule is to be defined by the number of days students are in attendance whether through synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

- Students who are receiving direct instruction virtually with their class while in quarantine should be counted as in-person since they are participating as if they were physically in the classroom.
- Students who actively participate online while "normal" classes and times are in session should be considered as part of 100% attendance.
  - Ex. Students who go to in-class learning two days consecutively for block scheduling or every other day for traditional schedule and then are actively participating online during "off days" should be counted as 100% in attendance.

In short, the 50% participation requirements for full funding should be waived in the midst of the current health concerns. We need to be focused on safely educating students in the best manner possible based on various district concerns and not on meeting a 51% mandate. This is true for any or all programs that have been developed due to the pandemic.

**4. Describe the impact of virtual education on your district's finances both in terms of (a) what your district would have lost if your 2020-21 virtual students were only funded at 85% and (b) actual, additional expenses for the creation of virtual programs for 2020-21 in your district.**

There was no reduction in teacher expenses due to the students requesting virtual learning. With the uncertainty of COVID-19 and flu season approaching this winter, we have two options: continue to provide virtual/synchronous instruction with the added costs or not offer virtual instruction next semester and risk having students leave our district, not be included in the second count day, and lose state funding. The second option would increase the financial loss for schools, making it greater than the numbers listed below. A change in funding midstream would mean changes in programming to adapt to the loss of funding.

Elkhart Schools - 12,464 students

- Would lose about \$11,000,000 dollars if our 11,600 students are funded at 85%.
- Down an additional \$1.4 million from losing about 400 students in enrollment.
- Spending nearly \$200,000 in Title funds and CARES Act funds to support expanded internet access and wi-fi on buses.
- Approximately \$1,000,000 will be spent for some added personnel and the paying of teaching overloads to our teachers at all levels.

Scott County - 2,691 students

- Would lose about \$530,000 dollars if funded at 85%
- Approximately \$550,000 will be spent to due to additional COVID-19 expenditures

Greater Jasper Consolidated Schools - 3,203 Students

- Would lose \$141,075 if virtual students were funded at 85%
- Virtual education is costing our Education Fund \$500,000 to \$700,000 in additional expenditures otherwise used to support our traditional learning environment.
- We have used CARES money to pay for hotspots for accessibility issues for students and staff.
- Webcams and Zoom subscriptions have been purchased to allow for direct, simultaneous teacher instruction from the classroom.

MSDWC - 2,023 students

- Would lose about \$148,359.75 if funded at 85%.
- 55 students returned back to face to face after count day
- We anticipate around \$150,000 in stipends for the current school year to cover extra teacher duties.
- Have tracked \$112,900 for expenses for COVID-related purchases up to date.
- Hotspot costs have continued to rise and will do so especially if districts are shut down over the winter.

#### Washington Township - 11,157 students

- We will lose close to \$9.5 million.
- Current staffing is being used to accommodate the all-virtual and hybrid students; however, moving forward there is concern about the sustainability of this model.

#### Decatur County - 1,860 Students

- Would lose about \$120,000 if funded at 85%.
- Additional expenses are being incurred from the use of virtual curriculum (Edmentum).
- Stipends are paid to special ed teachers to provide services both in and out of the classroom and not available on Edmentum.
- Technology purchases for virtual education, quarantine, isolated and contact traced students are in excess of \$710,000, almost 6% of the overall Education Fund.

#### Yorktown Community Schools - 2,685 students

- Would have lost \$461,943 in funding had virtual students counted at 85% for the year.
- Has tracked \$228,990.99 of expenses for COVID-related purchases.
- Budgeted \$112,500 for added personnel (virtual teacher, stipends for virtual grading, permanent substitutes) that are COVID-related.
- The district will receive \$178,000 in CARES money and has received \$17,000 of local grants for COVID-related expenses.
- Yorktown has seen the lowest growth it has experienced in ten years, almost certainly due to COVID-related fears. Had the district maintained its normal growth, state tuition support would have increased by an additional \$249,083.
- Overall, COVID will cost the district about \$395,574 in unreimbursed expenses and lost revenue.

#### South Bend Community School Corporation - 15,461 students

- Had adjustments not been made to the rules regarding the September ADM count, SBCSC stood to lose \$13.2 million if all students were funded at 85% (or \$6.6 million from July through December).
- The district hopes to return as many students as possible to in-person instruction by February, but assuming 25% of students choose to remain virtual, 85% funding for these students would result in a loss of \$1.7 million from January to June 2021.
- Additional device distribution in order to offer high-quality virtual instruction has carried substantial additional costs ranging upwards of \$1.1 million in 2020.

#### Noblesville Schools - 10,676 students

- Would lose approximately \$5.5 million if funded at 85%.
- The cost of additional teachers to run online, hybrid, synchronous and asynchronous programming is costing the district approximately \$1.0 million.
- Per-pupil loss, due to students not returning or choosing other educational options because of the pandemic, have been estimated to exceed \$850,000.
- If the current situation persists, over \$400,000 will be spent on extra transportation costs to ensure safety protocols.

Shelby Eastern Schools - 1,132 students

- Would lose approximately \$100,000 if funded at 85%
- \$120,000 spent for teacher stipends for virtual instructions

Jennings County School Corporation - 3,945 students

- Would lose approximately \$525,000 if funded at 85%.
- Per-pupil loss, due to students not returning or choosing other educational options because of the pandemic, have been estimated to exceed 1.4 million (224 students)
- If the current situation persists, over \$200,000 will be spent on extra transportation costs to ensure safety protocols.
- We have approximately 30% of students with either no or limited connectivity. We have had to purchase approximately \$500,000 in hotspots/service plans.
- We have used CARES funding for hotspots, cleaning supplies, PPE, furniture, technology, stipends to pay staff for remote teaching PD etc.

Wayne Township - 16,915 students

- For the 2020-2021 school year, we would have lost approximately \$1,000 per student if we had only received 85% of our funding for virtual students.
- With 4,000 students virtual and our 6-12 students only being in school 40% of the time, they would have been funded at the 85% virtual level as well. That would have resulted in a loss of approximately \$11,000,000 for the 2020-2021 school year